

“There are social benefits to using public transit, with frequent users connecting socially and fostering supportive friendships. At CAT, we strive to change lives by offering transportation options to all, which makes the community a better place to live.” — Michelle Arnold, Director of Public Transit & Neighborhood Enhancement Division for Collier County

Bicycling tips to keep you safe on the road



Naples Pathways Coalition members rode in the TD Bank Naples Bike Brunch in 2016. The cycling event is for every fitness level. STEPHEN WRIGHT

Michelle Avola
Executive Director of Naples Pathways Coalition

May is National Bike Month, and whether you frequently get around town on two wheels or your bike has a bit of dust collecting on the seat, there are some important safety tips we all need to keep in mind before our next ride.

- Bikes are allowed on the road and are considered a vehicle, so you must stop at stop signs and obey traffic lights, just as cars do.

- Ride with traffic, on the same side of the road as cars.

- Watch out for opening car doors, debris, and children and animals that may run in front of you.

- NEVER wear headphones or talk on

your cell phone while riding.

- Be predictable and ride defensively. Beware of blind spots. Make eye contact with motorists before crossing in front of them.

- Wear brightly colored clothing so drivers can see you. Flashing lights, even during the day, increase visibility.

- Point to the left or right to indicate that you plan to turn.

Helmets

When riding a bike, adults and children should wear helmets correctly.

- Straps should be fastened and snug underneath your chin (leaving room for

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Michelle Arnold
Guest Columnist

Try transit as an alternative to driving everywhere

I had the pleasure of meeting one who recently moved to Collier County after living and working there for three years. He informed me that while living there, he and his family did not drive. They were driven by a personal driver or rides. It wasn't until he returned to the United States that he realized how much his stress level was reduced by not driving.

In keeping with the Blue Zone concept of power 9 principles to move well, I offer you an alternative to driving and instead using public transit.

To use transit, you will be required to move naturally by walking to the nearest bus stop. For some people, the distance to the closest stop might be as much as a half-mile. Some may have a bike or other wheeled device to walk or ride to the closest bus stop. This may be your choice toward better maintained health.

At least once a month I like to use public transit to work. Sometimes I ride my bike to the stop, and on other cool days I enjoy the walk. It's as if I observe when I walk. My walk takes about 15 minutes, and it allows me to plan my day. I just enjoy the beautiful place I live. Often, I run into the same people on my walk: a mother packing for school full of kids for the trip to school, a neighbor taking the dog for a morning walk.

When I board the bus, I am greeted by a friendly driver who waits for me to find a seat before he starts the bus to the next stop. Depending on the day, I might listen to music on my phone, catch up on Facebook or check my email. Similar to my walk, I often see familiar faces on the bus ride. The route I take gives me a couple of connections, so I run in to a variety of people. Riding the bus really allows me to downshift, in the morning and again at the end of the day.

Choosing transit has not only allowed me to practice moving well and downshifting, but it gives me a further appreciation of the community that I live in. I encourage you to try that choice every now and then from now on! You will surely love it and you might come to love it.

Michelle Arnold is Director of Public Transit & Neighborhood Enhancement Division for Collier County.



Restaurant worker Coco Zdravkovski shows off his bike, outfitted with safety lights. In 2015, volunteers from the Naples Pathways Coalition installed headlights and taillights on 90 bicycles belonging to Fifth Avenue restaurant workers. LANCE SHEARER/SPECIAL TO THE NAPLES DAILY NEWS

Tips

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one finger) so the helmet will not slip back on your head.

- The helmet should cover your forehead, with room for only two fingers between your brow and the helmet.

- Replace helmets after any impact from a fall. The impact creates a weakness that causes insufficient protection. And heat and sun break down the foam layer, so Rreplace helmets every three years.

Lights

If you ride at night, try to stay on roads that are familiar and brightly lit. Lights are required by law in Florida from dusk through dawn.

- Use a front lamp that shines a white light and can be seen from a distance of 300 feet.

- Use a red rear light that can be seen from a distance of 500 feet.

- Use reflectors on each pedal and/or on the shoes or ankles of the bicyclist that can be seen from 200 feet.

Tips for kids

Ride with them, set a good example and stress the importance of safety.

- Young children should use bikes with coaster brakes (that brake when pedaled backward). With hand brakes, a child's hands must be large enough and strong enough to squeeze the levers.

- Make sure bikes are the right size, not a size to "grow into." Your child should be able to straddle a bike with both feet on the ground.

- When riding on sidewalks, children need to watch for cars exiting driveways. Also, teach them to watch out for wet leaves, gravel, sand and curves.

- Make sure your child is careful about keeping loose pant legs, straps and shoelaces from getting caught in the spokes of the wheel or bicycle chain. Teach your child to never ride barefoot or while wearing sandals or flip-flops.

Distracted drivers

Many drivers are distracted by phones, pets, kids, eating and other activities. Adults and children should always be alert!